

Message Text

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64

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 DODE-00 PA-02 USIA-15 PRS-01

SP-02 /051 W

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R 152250Z JAN 75

FM AMCONSUL SYDNEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6000

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

/AMCONSUL MELBOURNE 0746

UNCLAS SYDNEY 0106

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, PGOV, AS

SUBJ: NEW SOUTH WALES POWER WORKERS STRIKE

1. A STRIKE BY 65 MAINTENANCE MEN AT FOUR NSW GENERATING PLANTS WHICH STARTED ON JANUARY 8, 1975, HAS LED TO A GOVERNMENT ORDERED CURTAILMENT ON USE OF ELECTRICITY THROUGHOUT THE STATE. THE STRIKE BY THESE 65 MAINTENANCE WORKERS IS IN SUPPORT OF WAGE CLAIMS BY 4000 ELECTRICITY COMMISSION WORKERS, BUT HAS NOT BEEN AUTHORIZED BY THE NSW LABOR COUNCIL.

2. ELECTRICITY USE HAS BEEN BANNED FOR ALL AIR CONDITIONING AND OUTSIDE ILLUMINATION, AND INTERIOR LIGHTING HAS BEEN CUT BY ONE-HALF. PREMIER LEWIS HAS ORDERED DRAFT LEGISLATION TO FORCE WORKERS BACK TO WORK AND IS CONSIDERING AN EMERGENCY SESSION OF THE NSW PARLIAMENT IF THE STRIKE IS NOT ENDED BY NEXT WEEK. POWER TO RESIDENCES HAS BEEN CUT FOR ABOUT TWO HOURS DAILY AS THE STATE SHIFTS ELECTRICITY ON ITS GRID. THE STATE MAY ALSO ORDER A FOUR-DAY WEEK FOR FACTORY WORKERS BY ZONING INDUSTRIAL ELECTRICITY USE THROUGHOUT THE STATE.

3. THE MAINTENANCE WORKERS ON STRIKE ARE MEMBERS OF AN ORGANIZATION, ELECTRICITY COMMISSION COMBINED DELEGATES ORGANIZATION (ECCUDO), WHICH IS NOT RECOGNIZED BY THE LABOR

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COUNCIL OF NSW. THE STATE GOVERNMENT IS UNWILLING TO MEET

WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF ECCUDO UNLESS MEMBERS OF THE LABOR COUNCIL ARE PRESENT. THE LABOR COUNCIL HAS ORDERED ECCUDO TO END THE STRIKE AND USE REGULAR NEGOTIATING MEANS TO PRESS THEIR WAGE DEMANDS. ECCUDO HAS STATED IT IS UP TO UNION MEMBERS WHETHER TO RETURN TO WORK.

4. COMMENT: THE LAST POWER WORKERS STRIKE IN NOVEMBER 1973 OVER SIMILAR DEMANDS, RESULTED IN SIMILAR ACTIONS BY LABOR UNIONS AND THE STATE GOVERNMENT. THIS IS THE FIRST TEST FOR NEW PREMIER LEWIS AND HE HAS ACTED IN A TOUGHER AND MORE ACTIVE MANNER THAN HIS PREDECESSOR.
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